

On Tuesday, January 30, 2007, the Committee held an oversight hearing on allegations of political interference with government climate change science. Witnesses at the hearing included a representative of the Union of Concerned Scientists, a former official at the U.S. Climate Change Science Program, and a NASA atmospheric physicist. At the hearing, the Committee heard about numerous instances of political interference with the work of climate scientists under the Bush Administration. [A transcript of this hearing is now available.](#)

Widespread Political Interference with Government Climate Science.

Dr. Francesca Grifo of the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) released a new survey that revealed that 150 federal climate scientists personally experienced at least one incident of political interference during the past five years. UCS received reports of at least 435 specific incidents of political interference with the work of government climate scientists.

White House Edits to Climate Change Documents.

Rick Piltz, formerly a Senior Associate at the U.S. Climate Change Science Program (CCSP), testified that he left the program because “politicization of climate science communication by the current Administration was undermining the credibility and integrity of the” CCSP. He testified about the role of Philip Cooney, former Chief of Staff of the White House Council on

Environmental Quality, in editing science program documents like the CCSP Strategic Plan and CCSP's annual report, Our Changing Planet. According to Mr. Piltz, "Taken in the aggregate, the changes had the cumulative effect of shifting the tone and content of an already quite cautiously-worded draft to create an enhanced sense of scientific uncertainty about climate change and its implications."

Administration Stifling Communication of Findings.

Dr. Drew Shindell, an atmospheric physicist at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, told the Committee about his efforts to inform the public of his findings on the warming of Antarctica. He testified that, as a result of intervention by political appointees, his press release "was repeatedly delayed, altered and watered down." Dr. Shindell also testified that NASA scientists were prohibited from discussing their scientific findings with the press without a NASA press officer monitoring the telephone call or in-person interview.

Preliminary Results of Committee Investigation.

Chairman Waxman released a memorandum at the hearing that summarized White House documents reviewed by Committee staff. These documents indicated that White House officials sought to edit an EPA report (1) to add "balance" by emphasizing the "beneficial effects" of climate change, (2) to delete a discussion of the human health and environmental effects of climate change, (3) to strike any discussion of atmospheric concentrations of carbon because carbon levels are not a "good indicator of climate change," and (4) to remove the statement that "changes observed over the last several decades are likely mostly the result of human activities." Some of the most questionable edits were urged by Phillip Cooney.

Documents and Links

- [Hearing Notice and Witness List](#)
- [Chairman Waxman's Opening Statement](#)
- [Witness Testimony: Francesca T. Grifo, Ph.D., Union of Concerned Scientists](#)
- [Witness Testimony: Dr. Drew T. Shindell](#)
- [Witness Testimony: Rick Piltz, Government Accountability Project](#)
- [Witness Testimony: Roger A. Pielke, Jr., University of Colorado, Boulder](#)
- [Memo to Committee Members Regarding CEQ Documents](#)
- [Atmosphere of Pressure: Political Interference in Federal Climate Science](#)
- [Letter to CEQ Chairman James Connaughton](#)
- [Hearing Summary](#)
- [Hearing Transcript](#)